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MDC Says Summertime is for the Birds

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Naturalists encourage bird baths, feeding and keeping an eye out for summertime nesters.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) says summertime is for the birds. According to MDC naturalist Angela Pierce, though spring is when birds may come to mind the most, there are many reasons to consider them in the hotter months.

“Many birds can use some help to beat the summertime heat,” said Pierce. “Bird baths, especially at different height levels, can provide backyard birds with a refreshing chance to get a drink or cool off with a bath.”

Pierce recommends changing the bird bath water periodically to cut down on mosquitos and clean it occasionally with a scrub brush to prevent the spread of diseases.

Though many people feed birds in winter, bird feeding is also beneficial in the summer months. Pierce recommends adding different foods to the normal backyard menu such as artificial nectar for hummingbirds, oranges and grape jelly for Orioles and mealworms for bluebirds. For the artificial nectar, mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar to 1 cup water and pour into a hummingbird feeder.

Pierce said to be on the lookout for summertime nesters such as American goldfinches, American robins and mourning doves. American goldfinches start nesting in June or July. They feed their young seeds, so they must wait until these seeds develop on plants.

American robins continue to nest in summer, having up to three broods. The mourning dove beats the robin by having up to six broods a year, nesting well into the early fall.

“Summer-time nesters sometimes cause people to worry,” Pierce said. “It can surprise people to see baby birds that haven’t quite figured out how to fly and end up falling out of the nest, but people should not interfere with fledgling birds.”

Instead, Pierce suggests not drawing attention to the young bird, staying a distance away and leaving it alone. Keep pet cats or dogs away from the fledgling and realize the bird’s parents are keeping a close watch from a distance.

“Bird parents will only return when people aren’t around,” Pierce said.

More information about summertime birding will be included in “What’s the Buzz,” an upcoming free program at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center, Saturday, June 17, from 1 to 3 p.m. No registration is required for this event. Participants will learn how birds, bees, butterflies and even bats work to pollinate flowers throughout the summer.

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